United Nations A/50/PV.1

General Assembly
Fiftieth Session

Official Records

1st plenary meeting
Tuesday, 19 September 1995, 3 p.m.
New York

Temporary President: Mr. Essy ..... (Côte d'Ivoire)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Opening of the session by the Chairman of the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire

The Temporary President *(interpretation from French)*: I declare open the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The Temporary President *(interpretation from French)*: Before calling on representatives to observe a minute of silent prayer or meditation in accordance with rule 62 of the rules of procedure, I propose that as we do so we also observe the International Day of Peace, on this third Tuesday of September, as proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 36/67 of 30 November 1981, to be devoted to commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace both within and among all nations and peoples.

I now invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

Item 122 of the provisional agenda

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/50/444)

The Temporary President *(interpretation from French)*: Before turning to the next item on our agenda, I should like, in keeping with the established practice, to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/50/444, which has been circulated in the General Assembly Hall this afternoon. It contains a letter addressed to me by the Secretary-General in which he informs the Assembly that 15 Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter.

I should like to remind delegations that, under Article 19 of the Charter,

> "A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years."

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

95-86011 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Credentials of representatives to the fiftieth session of the General Assembly (rule 28)

(a) Appointment of the members of the Credentials Committee

The Temporary President *(interpretation from French)*: Rule 28 of the rules of procedure provides that the General Assembly at the beginning of each session shall appoint, on the proposal of the President, a Credentials Committee consisting of nine members.

Accordingly, it is proposed that, for the fiftieth session, the Credentials Committee should consist of the following Member States: China, Luxembourg, Mali, the Marshall Islands, the Russian Federation, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States of America and Venezuela.

May I take it that the States I have mentioned are hereby appointed members of the Credentials Committee?

It was so decided.

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Election of the President of the General Assembly

The Temporary President *(interpretation from French)*: I now invite members of the General Assembly to proceed to the election of the President of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

May I recall that, in accordance with paragraph 1 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 33/138, the President of the General Assembly at the fiftieth session should be elected from among the Western European and other States.

In this connection, I have been informed by the Chairman of the Group of Western European and other States that the Group has endorsed the candidacy of His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal for the presidency of the General Assembly.

Taking into account the provisions of paragraph 16 of annex VI to the rules of procedure, I therefore declare His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal elected President of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session by acclamation.

I extend my very sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, and I invite him now to assume the presidency.

I request the Chief of Protocol to escort the President to the podium.

Mr. Freitas do Amaral took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, President of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session

The President: First, I should like to express my profound gratitude for the honour the Assembly has bestowed on me by electing me President and for the confidence in me and my country that this election represents.

I am fully aware of the heavy burden and the tremendous responsibilities associated with the office of President of the United Nations General Assembly, but I am pleased that the Assembly has selected me for this office and wish to assure representatives that I am fully prepared to perform every duty that this office entails. All Member States and their representatives can count on me to be of use to them to the best of my ability and to make a real contribution to the effective functioning of the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies.

I should also like to state at the outset that I personally intend to preside over the working groups, of which the President of the General Assembly serves ex officio as Chairman, on the understanding that those bodies are imbued with a general spirit of consensus and reform, which my participation might help to enhance.

I should like to express my gratitude and praise to the President of the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly, Mr. Amara Essy of Côte d'Ivoire, for his untiring efforts and complete dedication in performing the duties of his lofty post, for all his personal contributions to the smooth functioning of the General Assembly and, lastly, for the fact that he was the sponsor of the establishment, on 14 September 1995, of the important Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System, whose relevance cannot be overemphasized. This is another working group the chairmanship of which has been assigned to me as from today, and I intend to preside personally over its deliberations.

I should now like to address the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in order to express my great admiration for him and my satisfaction at the great prestige he deservedly enjoys throughout the world. Having taken up his difficult and demanding tasks at a particularly important time in the history of the United Nations, Mr. Boutros-Ghali has shown himself, throughout his term of office, to be not only an outstanding intellectual capable of theorizing and conceptualizing problems and of thinking before acting, but also a man of action capable of taking timely decisions on the most difficult issues that every day come before the chief executive of the United Nations. A tireless negotiator for peace and a steadfast promoter of development, Boutros Boutros-Ghali has carried out work that is outstanding in every respect and that continues to earn him our gratitude. I assure him that from this, the very first day of my term as President of the General Assembly, I shall give him my fullest and most loyal cooperation.

Finally, I should like to offer special greetings to all the Member countries of the United Nations, whatever their history, geographical location, traditions or form of government. I shall respect all of them in the same way, in strict observance of the principle of equality.

It is, in fact, not difficult for a Portuguese to respect, understand and have friendly feelings towards the most varied countries of the world. A seafaring people, a country of discoveries, a nation open to exchanges with diverse cultures and civilizations, Portugal has always been one of the first European States — at times the very first — to come into contact with all the other regions of the world. From the north and from the south we had our first encounters with Africa; travelling west, we arrived in the Americas and made contact with Brazil; in the Middle East, we left traces and vestiges that survive to this day; we had a presence in India, in Japan and throughout Asia, where our historical memory is still respected today.

We are therefore a people with a universal outlook, and over the past 500 years we have grown accustomed to taking a global view of world problems, life and mankind. Members can therefore count on a President who will not only respect each and every one of them but who, thanks to the historical and cultural traditions of his country, will find it easy to understand their differences, sensibilities and needs.

The five centuries of Portuguese travels throughout the world have had international consequences of the greatest importance. Today there is not just one country, but seven countries, whose official language is Portuguese. Portuguese is one of the world's major languages: it is spoken by approximately 200 million people, and, although only 10 million Portuguese live in Portugal, there are at least 4 million emigrants living abroad who have taken our culture and way of life to the four corners of the Earth and constitute the "Portuguese diaspora" of which we are so proud.

It is in homage to this reality, so rich and so vast, that I beg the Assembly's indulgence to use my mother tongue here for a moment to say:

(spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the President's Office)

On the occasion of the election, for the first time in 50 years, of a Portuguese to the office of President of the United Nations General Assembly, I should like to extend my most warm, friendly and fraternal greetings to the seven States Members of this Organization whose official language is Portuguese: Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe and Portugal.

(spoke in French)

In spite of the difficulties with which we are faced, the criticism that has been directed at us and the crises that we are experiencing — one of which is particularly acute — this is the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, which gives us several important reasons to celebrate.

The League of Nations lasted little more than 20 years; the United Nations has now lasted half a century. The League of Nations did not manage to achieve its principal objective: to avoid the Second World War; the United Nations has managed to achieve its principal goal: to avoid a third world war. The League of Nations concentrated all its peacemaking efforts on disarmament; the United Nations understood from the start that disarmament, while very important, was not the only way to prevent war, and strengthened its collective security system with a range of policies for economic, social and educational development.

Our "founding fathers" were endowed with foresight: the establishment in 1945 of the United Nations represented great hope for all people of good will throughout the world. It is true that these past 50 years have not been marked exclusively by successes and

victories. The existence of the United Nations, like that of any organization, has been marked by many errors and defeats. But was that not inevitable, given the very nature of human beings, society and the world as it is?

In this connection, I should like to quote a remark about the United Nations which I consider apposite. It was made by a great President of the United States, John F. Kennedy, who said in 1962:

(spoke in English)

> "Our instrument and our hope is the United Nations, and I see little merit in the impatience of those who would abandon this imperfect world instrument because they dislike our imperfect world."

(spoke in French)

Today, after our Organization has been in existence 50 years, should our assessment of its activities be positive or negative? We are all well aware of the Organization's failures, especially its most recent ones. And the critics have not ceased their criticism. So, in the interest of balance, it is only fair to enumerate the main achievements of the United Nations.

The first, to which I have already spoken, but to which I wish to return because of its exceptional importance and which can never be stressed too much, is the following: the United Nations succeeded in avoiding what many deemed inevitable — the outbreak of a third world war. Although this result cannot be ascribed solely to the United Nations, the Organization did play a primary role in the prevention of armed East-West conflict which would have been fatal for mankind.

Three very important elements demonstrate that the international community has rightfully valued the actions carried out by the United Nations over the last 50 years. First, five Nobel prizes were awarded to the Organizations or to one of its elements. Secondly, the number of Member States has increased from 51 in 1945 to 185 in 1995. The fact that this number has more than tripled is because the great majority of countries of the world believe that the United Nations has more qualities and advantages than flaws and drawbacks. Thirdly, a decision was taken to hold in October a large meeting with the participation of more than 150 Heads of State or Government from the entire world. And, indeed, it is obvious that if so many outstanding leaders have decided to come to New York to commemorate a mere anniversary, it is because this anniversary is unquestionably the occasion for celebrating a series of important events.

I have already spoken of that global peace which fortunately has been maintained successfully for some 50 years now despite numerous local or regional conflicts which it has been impossible to avoid. But here, even in that difficult area or war and peace, the United Nations can pride itself on having made a decisive contribution to noticeable progress in the fields of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, and of having conducted negotiations and concluded agreements within the framework of the peace process for which the outcome was positive as, for example, in Cambodia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Eritrea, Mozambique and, we hope, also in Angola.

Secondly, the United Nations more than any other institution has contributed to establishing and attempting to guarantee in practice the primacy of international law, and it is well known that, without a state of law, a human being cannot know that peace, freedom or security which allows him to lead a normal existence in a civilized society. We will never forget the nightmare of "man who is a wolf to man" described with insight in the "state of nature" of the *Leviathan* of Thomas Hobbes. And, in speaking of the contribution of the United Nations to the recognition of the primacy of international law, I wish to hail the outstanding action and lofty prestige achieved by one of its major bodies, the International Court of Justice, to which I wish to pay a very sincere tribute.

Thirdly, also to the credit of the United Nations is the attention and importance which it attaches to human rights. It is the United Nations which has universalized them; it is the United Nations which has led States to accept, through the recognition of human rights, the fact that the State is at the service of man and not man at the service of the State. It is the United Nations which, not limiting itself to those classical human rights born of the American and the French revolutions, consecrated the fundamental rights of the second generation and, in particular, economic, social and cultural rights which allowed it to enrich the contribution of liberalism of the century of enlightenment through the contribution of democratic socialism of the nineteenth century. And, once again, it is the United Nations which today is playing a leading role in the struggle for the respect of the fundamental rights of the third generation — in particular, rights dealing with the protection of nature and of the environment, an area in which, for the first time in the history of mankind, it is no longer exclusively a

question of recognizing or establishing rights governing the relations of human beings among themselves or *vis-à-vis* the State, but also to attempt to establish and implement machinery which will lead to the recognition of the rights of animals and of nature in the face of acts of aggression perpetrated by the human being himself.

While I do not wish to dwell in detail on this subject, I must nevertheless emphasize at this solemn moment that I consider — as, to be sure, do all honest and civilized individuals — a major reason for pride and satisfaction the fact that it has been possible, once again thanks to the United Nations, to draw up and implement international conventions which do honour to mankind and which will form glorious landmarks in the history of the first 50 years of the Organization and will rank among its justified achievements. I am thinking ,in particular, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. What would mankind be without these basic texts? Would they ever have been produced without the intervention of the United Nations?

It is the United Nations to which we owe the contribution to universal awareness of the idea that our world is formed of equal beings all enjoying the same fundamental rights to human dignity. This ideal is already long-standing. Saint Paul affirmed that with the "new man" ... "there is neither Greek nor Jew, ... barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free" (*The Holy Bible, Colossians 3:10-11*). But while that ideal is indeed an ancient one, nevertheless 20 centuries were required to enshrine it in a legal declaration of universal scope and here the credit is due to the United Nations. That ideal must never be forgotten nor must we fail to mention it, whether or not we adhere to the religious tradition of which it was born.

Fourthly, the United Nations certainly has the right to claim the major credit linked with two other victories won by mankind in the twentieth century, namely, decolonization and the end of apartheid. The fact that the number of States Members of the Organization has increased from 51 to 185 is due basically to decolonization, which reflected in facts the principle of the right of peoples to self-determination stated in Article I of the Charter. And the fact is that if an end was put to the unacceptable regime in South Africa this is in great part due to the condemnations and criticisms levelled by the United Nations in application of the second paragraph of the Preamble and of Article 55 (c) of the Charter.

It is interesting to emphasize that the leaders who succeeded in bringing about decolonization, like those who put an end to apartheid, had the most wide-ranging political convictions, a fact which clearly demonstrates that the ideals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations are neither partisan nor ideological, nor religious, but purely and simply humanitarian, and that it suffices to believe in the dignity of all human beings and to respect it in practice in order to be a law-abiding and consistent Member of the United Nations.

My country, Portugal, was one of the last European countries to decolonize, a task it completed when democracy replaced the dictatorship that had governed us for 50 years. The imperatives of our decolonization were national, of course, but that obligation, as we see it, also flowed from the Charter of the United Nations and many resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

In the specific case of East Timor — and aware of the duty of impartiality incumbent upon me as President of the General Assembly — allow me to express hope for the success of the mission of mediation and good offices that the General Assembly has expressly entrusted to the Secretary-General. He has my full confidence in regard to the efforts he will continue to make to solve this question through dialogue between Portugal and Indonesia, with respect for the Charter of the United Nations.

Fifthly, the United Nations has contributed, especially since the end of the cold war, to consolidating and concretizing the process of internal democratization on which many countries have embarked, countries that have decided of their own will to move from a one-party regime to a multi-party system. It is not for the United Nations to dictate to a Member State the form of government the latter must adopt in its political constitution. On the other hand, the United Nations can and must assist those who decide on their own to embark upon a process of democratization. This is what it has done to this very day in more than 45 countries, providing assistance not only in the electoral sphere but in other fields as well. Those who are convinced, as I am, of the superiority of the pluralistic democratic model must stress this fact and welcome it.

Sixthly — and lastly — I should like to draw attention to one of the most relevant and positive aspects of the United Nations, one which in most cases the Organization's detractors, and even impartial observers,

frequently overlook. Here, I am referring to the outstandingly commendable part played by a large number of autonomous United Nations agencies and bodies in promoting the economic, social and cultural development of the poorest and most disadvantaged of the world's peoples.

For example, would not the world situation be far more serious and terrible, far more dishonourable for all of us, if the World Health Organization (WHO) were not combating age-old diseases; if the International Labour Organization (ILO) were not working to improve conditions in the workplace; if the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) were not here to ensure respect for the rights and well-being of children, to whom we must provide all we can since they represent the future of mankind; if the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) did not engage in a campaign against illiteracy and did not dedicate itself to improving the cultural, scientific and educational level of developing countries; if the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees did not exist and did not deal with those who suddenly find themselves, through no fault of their own, families without homes, without jobs and without food, those whose situation is one of our era's greatest tragedies?

In short, notwithstanding the many errors and setbacks that have studded the 50 years of existence of the United Nations — inevitable in the history of any institution and any individual — there have at the same time been many achievements, successes and victories that must be credited to the Organization.

The millions of dead and deprived will attest forever to our shortcomings. We must honour their memory and lament the fact that we were not able or did not manage to do more to save them.

It is, however, true that millions of human beings, and perhaps even more, constitute before our very eyes irrefutable evidence and clear proof of United Nations successes. For each human being who has not died of a disease that has been eradicated thanks to the work of the WHO, for each worker who, because of an ILO convention, has not lost his job or been mistreated, for each child who has received some assistance and tender care from UNICEF, for each woman and each man who has learned to read and has gained access to the treasures of culture through a programme of UNESCO, for each family, finally, that has been given a roof, an article of clothing or a meal from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, it is not only the United Nations that has honoured its commitments and justified its existence but mankind as well that has been enriched, that has been ennobled, that has been enhanced because someone has chosen, on its behalf, to do good in a disinterested way, without seeking anything in return.

Let us therefore pay tribute to the founders of the United Nations — and to all who have kept it alive so far — for having managed to create and preserve the splendid work of human solidarity it represents, notwithstanding all its defects.

During the first 50 years of its existence the United Nations has been the birthplace, the depository and the catalyst of the very great progress achieved in the areas of law, peace and security, development, international cooperation, human rights, environmental protection and the enhancement of the human person, of his dignity and well-being. May it continue to be so, at the very least in as active a manner as in the past, in the 50 years to come.

(spoke in English)

Looking back over the past we can conclude, I think fairly and impartially, that in its first 50 years of existence the United Nations has given a positive performance which should be commended and celebrated.

I am well aware, however, as surely we all are, that there are many matters to be reviewed, many errors to be corrected and many reforms to be undertaken.

It is not for me personally to decide what must be done or to present a programme of reforms to the General Assembly, which is sovereign in such matters.

Yet the members of the Assembly would surely find it strange if, in my inaugural address, I only spoke glowingly of the past without saying anything about the problems of the present and the prospects for the future.

The bipolar world characterized by the East-West confrontation, the global nuclear threat and the systematic paralysis of the Security Council, in the context of a cold-war scenario which several attempts at detente never succeeded in eliminating, has come to an end. A new international order has gradually begun to take shape, but its form is still vague, confused and imprecise. If the Congress of Vienna was the swift response to the end of the Napoleonic wars, if the League of Nations was the

possible response to the end of the First World War and if the United Nations was the appropriate response to the end of the Second World War, then what is — or what ought to be — the necessary response to the end of the cold war and of the bipolar nuclear confrontation of the past 50 years?

That is the main problem that all the world's countries must try to solve. For the problem does exist, but it has not yet been solved.

Now that the utopias which promised "the end of history" have been quickly proved to be unrealistic, as have the easy illusions engendered by the rapid and efficient conclusion of the Gulf War, the harsh reality of international life in all of its Hobbesian brutishness has demonstrated that the new international order has yet to be devised, that peace has yet to be consolidated, that flare-ups of radical nationalism have yet to be brought under control, and that respect for human rights has yet to be guaranteed in many parts of the world. The United Nations, now released from the impasse into which the East-West conflict had driven it, is being held responsible by many, not only for those things that it can do and is not doing, but also for those things which it cannot or should not do but which many people erroneously think it has an obligation to do.

Those who think this way obviously forget that the United Nations cannot be asked to do what it cannot deliver; that our Organization is governed by a Charter whose principles cannot be violated; and that the United Nations has always been, is now and always will be what its Member States want or allow it to be.

What are we to think of all this?

I speak in my personal capacity, and the views I am expressing today are solely my own. But I will not hesitate to say, frankly and straightforwardly, what I think about some of the problems and difficulties which we are facing at present and which will probably dominate our agenda during the next few decades. I will summarize my position in the following 12 points:

First, the United Nations has ceased to be an intergovernmental organization with a limited membership and has become the only international organization that is universal. Efforts must be made to ensure that all States that are not yet Members should seek to be admitted in the near future. For the same reason, the most serious penalty imposed on a Member State should never be expulsion, but rather suspension, for the United Nations must, as a matter of principle, include all the world's countries.

Second, the new international order that is to be built, now that the cold war and the East-West confrontation are over, must not leave out the United Nations, either by replacing it with some new, radically different organization or by doing away entirely with any international organization of a universal nature. The United Nations, with its essential features, must therefore be preserved, although it can and should be reformed where it is shown to be faulty, inefficient or out of tune with current conditions.

Third, the year 1995 to 1996, which coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, is an especially appropriate time to reflect upon the Organization and to bring to completion or initiate the most important reforms of which it stands in need. The spirit of reform can be created and sustained during this fiftieth session of the Assembly, but if we fail to seize this opportunity, the occasion may be lost for many years to come. I am prepared, for my part, to do everything I can to make the needed reforms a reality, according to the wishes of the General Assembly and the Member States.

Fourth, the revision of some Articles and provisions of the Charter of the United Nations is, I believe, a timely and necessary task. I do not think, however, that this needs to be done all at once. An incremental approach may be preferable, provided that consistency is maintained among the different reforms.

Fifth, the United Nations is a legal entity with the nature of an association. The general principles of law governing associations must therefore be reaffirmed and observed with regard to the United Nations. It should be remembered that with the United Nations, as with any other association, those who join do so voluntarily, and if they do not leave it is because they do not wish to do so. Thus, each Member State, as long as it retains its status as a Member, must be able to enjoy all its rights as long as it fulfils all its duties, and should be required to fulfil all its duties in order to enjoy all its rights.

Sixth, one of the peremptory rules of the Charter is the duty of all Member States to pay their annual assessments, as determined by the General Assembly, to defray the expenses of the Organization. If all Member States meet this obligation in a timely manner, the United Nations will never have to face any financial crisis,

although occasional problems may be encountered. Consequently, any Member in arrears in the payment of its assessments must bear the appropriate consequences; otherwise, the principle of the equality of all Members would be violated and the proper functioning of the Organization would be placed in jeopardy. This rule must be applied to all Member States, from the biggest to the smallest, from the most powerful to the weakest.

Seventh, another absolute obligation of any member of any organization is to abide faithfully by the rules of law applicable to it. If disagreements arise concerning the interpretation or application of these rules, the principle of the separation of powers requires that they should be settled impartially by a court of law. The Charter of the United Nations provides for such a judicial body: the International Court of Justice. In my view, it is therefore utterly desirable for all countries that are Members of the United Nations to accept, within a relatively short time, the jurisdiction of the Court at The Hague. That it should still be possible to refuse the Court's jurisdiction strikes me as an anachronism left over from the days of unlimited State sovereignty, which is inconsistent with the prevailing principle of the primacy of international law.

Eighth, the spectacular growth in the number of States Members of the United Nations has had its proper and appropriate impact on the General Assembly, but the same is not true of the Security Council, which does not adequately reflect the political, economic, demographic and national realities of today's world. Reform of the Security Council is therefore required and urgent, but it cannot be carried out if national selfishness or domestic electoral considerations in Member countries are superimposed on the necessary spirit of cooperation and consensus.

Ninth, the United Nations can and must make a serious effort to be less expensive and more efficient. Recourse to outside bodies for advice on the most appropriate ways to achieve those goals should not be ruled out, as it does not offend the sovereignty of Member States or the decision-making powers that belong to the General Assembly or the Secretary-General. In that regard a number of basic truths must be kept in mind: first, only with the good will and determination of the General Assembly will it be possible to take the necessary steps to eliminate the many subcommissions and working groups which overlap, resulting in duplication or triplication or which, quite simply, no longer serve any purpose; secondly, Member States should be reminded, with respect to the difficult decisions which the Secretary-General must take in this respect, that in accordance with Article 100, paragraph 2, of the Charter,

> "Each Member of the United Nations undertakes to respect the exclusively international character of the responsibilities of the Secretary-General ... and not to seek to influence [him] in the discharge of [his] responsibilities."

Tenth, it is said that the United Nations costs too much and that drastic reductions are needed in its staff and budget. I do not question the possibility and desirability of cutting costs and achieving increased productivity: in any organization that is practicable and, every so often, even necessary. I should like, however, to remind everyone — solely in order to ensure that we do not lose touch with reality — that the current annual budget of the United Nations (excluding the peace-keeping operations) is $1.3 billion, which is about 25 per cent of the current annual budget of $5 billion of Portugal's Ministry of Education. If we bear in mind that Portugal is a country with a population of only 10 million and that the United Nations is a very large and complex world Organization, we will perhaps have a somewhat more realistic view of the question whether the United Nations is as expensive as some people claim, when it spends only one quarter of the current budget of Portugal's Ministry of Education.

Eleventh, what are truly expensive are peace-keeping operations, which have increased considerably in recent times. Suffice it to point out that 10 years ago there were 4,000 Blue Helmets serving around the world, while today there are around 70,000. Obviously, there is a financial problem here. But the main question, as everyone will appreciate, is not financial but rather a matter of general policy: How interventionist should the United Nations be with respect to peace-keeping operations? Should it intervene whenever it is desirable or only when it is strictly necessary and feasible? Should the Organization confine itself to peace-keeping or should it get involved in peace enforcement as well? Should it intervene directly or through regional organizations and multinational forces? And when it is asked to dispatch its Blue Helmets, should it agree to do so only when effective conditions for their security and self-defence have been or can be guaranteed — as seems obvious to me — or should it be allowed to send Blue Helmets to become scapegoats for disagreements between Member States and the inability of some Member States to take the necessary decisions?

These are the major issues in the area of peace-keeping operations which the United Nations — that is, the States Members of the United Nations — must address and resolve. The financial issues are by definition secondary and may even prove easier to solve if the prior political questions have been satisfactorily dealt with.

Allow me at this point to pay a most heartfelt tribute to all those Blue Helmets who have served or are serving under the United Nations flag, who have demonstrated or are currently demonstrating their military dedication, and who in some cases have given their very lives for the ideals which all countries should share but which, shamefully, are flouted by some.

Twelfth, the United Nations does not — as everyone knows — exist solely for the purpose of guaranteeing peace and security; it also exists to promote the development of the less developed countries and to ensure the observance of generally accepted universal values, such as "human rights", public health and the protection of the environment and nature. It is essential, in my opinion, that the objective of peace and security should not diminish the importance or obscure the objective of development. It is essential not to repeat the error of the League of Nations. It is essential to continue, as we are doing today, to spend a larger share of the United Nations budget on development assistance than on support for peace-keeping operations. As Pope Paul VI stated,

"Development is the new name for peace."

Without development there can be no peace — at least not the just and lasting peace to which all men and women of good will aspire. In my personal opinion, the fight against poverty, disease, ignorance and all the sufferings that place men beneath the minimum level required for the dignity of the human person must be our principal commitment for the twenty-first century.

These are the 12 points that I feel are most important when thinking about the needed reform of the United Nations. But as I have said, it is not a programme, or even a proposal: it is only my personal vision. It is for you, the representatives, and the Governments that you represent here, to put forward proposals, to discuss the issues and to take decisions.

I hope that we will all be able to continue to move forward with a comprehensive vision towards a broad community of values, principles and attitudes that will make it possible to take the decisions and measures for reforming and strengthening the United Nations, with the aim of ensuring the peaceful coexistence and equitable development of all the world's peoples.

I thank you for the attention with which you have listened to me. We shall begin straight away to work to ensure that this fiftieth session of the United Nations General Assembly shall be an important landmark in the history of the Organization.

Let us all allow ourselves to be caught up in the spirit of the fiftieth anniversary and to draw from that spirit the inspiration and the good will that will enable us to tackle the issues, to reach agreements, to adopt resolutions and, above all, to implement in good time the reforms that are so urgently needed.

Let us not be afraid of discussion, dialogue, or the clash of ideas and proposals. Let us not be afraid either of negotiation, of the spirit of compromise or of the building of consensus. In the pursuit of these goals members can count at all times on the President of the General Assembly whom they have elected today.

In its new President, the General Assembly — and every Member State — will always find a man of tolerance, a man of dialogue and a man of hope: hope for a better world through peace, freedom, justice, education, health and development. Let us strive together — we who call ourselves the United Nations — to ensure through our united efforts that next year, at the close of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, which is beginning now, the world will be a somewhat better place than it is today.

Special ceremony on the occasion of the opening of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly

The President I now call on the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: I congratulate you, Your Excellency Mr. Freitas do Amaral, on your election to the presidency of this great Assembly. You bring to your task the wisdom and creativity for which your nation is known. This is enriched by your own depth of diplomatic experience and achievement.

I also wish to express my deep appreciation for the contribution made by Minister Amara Essy as President of the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly. He guided its deliberations with great skill and purpose.

The United Nations has completed 50 years. Today we open the door to a second half-century. We have a choice to make and only we can make it. Will we walk through the door to the future with faith and determination and in solidarity? Or will it be with the voices of scepticism, criticism and neo-isolationism ringing in our ears?

The signs should not be difficult to read and understand. Governments, non-governmental organizations and people everywhere are expressing their views with their presence. One hundred and eighteen Heads of State and Government went to Copenhagen for the World Summit for Social Development. Over 150 Heads of State and Government will gather here at the United Nations next month. Forty thousand participants — governmental and non-governmental, from all over the world — participated in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing this month. And millions and millions of people of all ages have responded to the countless opportunities for education, discussion and action created to mark UN-50, this year-long period of commemoration, assessment and commitment.

These numbers reveal the significance of the world Organization. Pessimism, criticism and opposition are insignificant when matched against this evidence. At every level — local, national, regional, international and global — there is an awareness that the United Nations, for all its setbacks, is recognized for having done so much, so well and in such a short span of time. The numbers speak of resolve and continued commitment. They reveal an awareness that the United Nations represents and engages the causes that humanity holds most dear.

The choice is ours to make. The fact that we are here holds great meaning in itself. I warmly welcome you all. This fiftieth session will be watched by the people of the world. We will fulfil their trust. We will work to realize their dreams.

(*spoke in French*)

In those few words, I have attempted to convey the exceptional importance which I attach to this session of the General Assembly. I am indeed convinced that at this fundamental time in history the General Assembly of the United Nations has an essential role to play.

The preamble of the Charter establishes the principle of the equality of nations large and small. It is the General Assembly that embodies this principle. It is therefore the General Assembly that holds within itself the democratic legitimacy of the world Organization. It is in the General Assembly that the profound aspirations of peoples and nations reside. And it is therefore here, within your Assembly, that the great endeavour of collective life, which the United Nations is duty-bound to bring to fruition, must be forged.

I also wished to tell you of the hopes and the trust that peoples and nations place in the action which you here will undertake, beginning today, on behalf of the international community. I know that you will be equal to your important mission. I assure you that you can rely on the Secretariat and on me to help you fulfil it.

The President: I now call on the representative of the United States of America as host country, the Honourable Rudolph Giuliani, Mayor of the City of New York.

Mr. Giuliani (United States of America): Welcome to New York City. I am honoured to be speaking before the United Nations General Assembly. I should like to join in congratulating Mr. Freitas do Amaral on his election as President of the General Assembly on one of the most important occasions in the history of the United Nations, its fiftieth anniversary.

When Mayor William O'Dwyer welcomed the United Nations representatives to New York City for the first time, he spoke of an immense reservoir of good will for the United Nations in the nation and in the City of New York. Now, a half-century later, New Yorkers are proud of the United Nations and its continued presence here. Their good will and their pride attest to the foresight of the organizers of the United Nations in choosing New York City as the Organization's permanent home.

As a centre of world trade, New York has always, from the very beginning, been open to different cultures — an openness that has produced a city like no other in the world. I often like to say that you cannot spend a single day in New York City without meeting someone who looks different from you, acts differently from you, speaks differently from you and thinks differently from you. After a day or two of confronting the differences that confront one all the time in New York City, any resident or visitor immediately comes to the conclusion that our differences are vastly outweighed by our similarities. That is why New York is not only the

world's most diverse city, but also the world's most cosmopolitan and most tolerant city.

In the same way, no matter where any of you come from, if you take even a brief trip with me in New York City, I can find someone from your country living here; I can find someone from the village or town that you come from living here; I can find someone who speaks your language and even the dialect of that language you may speak living here.

That is why New York City is the capital of the world. I very often say to the Governor of the State that I concede that Albany is the capital of New York State; and I have told President Clinton that I am required to concede that Washington is the capital of the United States — but New York City is the capital of the world. The presence of the United Nations in New York City makes that claim a very substantial one because it makes New York City the world's political capital. The United Nations enhances the position of New York City and of America and it enhances its prestige both at home and abroad, and it enhances our economy.

With all of that, it is strange that there is a movement in America to reduce to some extent our commitment to and, specifically, funding of the United Nations. To me, this is very ill-conceived. It would achieve only symbolic savings while greatly impeding the operation of the United Nations. It would hurt you in your operations. It would also hurt the economy of the United States and, specifically, the economy of New York City.

The continued viability of the United Nations is critical to America's mission to foster freedom and democracy throughout the world. While this body cannot solve every problem — nobody can — the United Nations provides a crucial forum for international debate and cooperation, and just as the United Nations has played a role in promoting peace and human rights, increasingly it will play a role in promoting international commerce, making it vitally important to the future of the United States as well as to the future of all the Member States.

And New York City is the place where the world does business. If the world has a single market-place, then New York City is that market-place — with the presence of two of the world's largest stock exchanges, the overwhelming number of banks, and the greatest concentration of media and advertising. This is the place in which people do business *together*.

I find it ironic that at the same time that America's economy is becoming more international and that America's success rests on the success of the world's economy, and vice versa, a strain of isolationism is once again infecting our political discourse. If it takes hold, America will be in danger of missing an important opportunity for its own economic expansion.

But I want you to take heart. America goes through cyclical changes in its varying feelings about isolationism and openness. There are many in America who believe that, instead of retreating from the world, we should be seeking new ways to use our leadership role in the world and in the United Nations to promote better cooperation between nations and to promote better economic cooperation.

It is in the interest of the United States politically and economically to exploit the role the United Nations can play in promoting peace and human rights — a role you have indeed played — and also to expand the opportunities for international business.

Sometimes leadership means taking unpopular positions and rejecting harmful political fads. Sometimes leadership means challenging myths that arise. That is the kind of leadership that we need in defining our relationship with the United Nations. It is a strong relationship and it is one that should, and will, grow.

And we must do the same thing in a related area — immigration. Some people are frightened of differences. They do not understand how differences in society can challenge and energize that society. My nation owes its existence to the hard work, determination and vision of immigrants, of people who come here with hopes and dreams and then make them real; and, in the end, support for immigration always prevails over suspicion and fear.

Involvement in the world, openness to new peoples and cultures are signs of a growing and dynamic society. We should all join together to make that possible. You cannot be a New Yorker, you cannot be part of this city, and not understand the value of diversity. New York City was built by immigrants and it will remain the greatest city in the world so long as we continue to renew ourselves and benefit from the energizing spirit that new people coming here to make a better future for themselves and their families can create.

I would like you to take a trip sometime to all the parts of the city — and I would like you to spend money

there. But specifically I would like you to come with me to, let us say, Flushing, Queens, where immigrants from many lands have created a vibrant, vital commercial and residential community. Their children in our public schools challenge us every day to do better. Similarly, we could take a trip to Brighton Beach and see what the Russian immigrant community there is doing, or to Crown Heights and see what the people from the West Indies — the Caribbean community — are building in the United States, or the Dominicans in Washington Heights, or the new Irish immigration in the Bronx, or the Koreans in the Willowbrook section of Staten Island. If we go to Queens we can see the most diverse part of the city of New York, where people from South America, the West Indies, Africa, Asia and Europe, living together, are building a very, very vibrant future.

All of them came to New York because they wanted a better life for themselves. They want to achieve; they want to build something better for their children; and that spirit challenges us here in New York and in America to do better. It is the sort of special thing that makes this city so wonderful. That is the precise spirit of immigration that has energized New York City from one generation to the next.

Every representative here today getting ready for this Assembly session and for this wonderful celebration should feel at home in New York City.

Fifty years after the end of the Second World War and with the cold war now behind us, the world looks forward to a new century in which nations will forge relationships based on mutual benefit, designed to promote cultural and economic growth. Nations that once reached out to each other tentatively, seeking to ease tensions and foster hope, can now move forward decisively with a free exchange of ideas and material goods.

New York City is very, very proud to play host to this new and vibrant cultural and economic interchange, and we are certain that the United Nations and its role in this are at the core of that growth and progress.

So all New Yorkers join with me in being gratified that the issues that concern the world will be debated, and as many as possible resolved, here in New York City, in the United Nations.

Our relationship is five decades old, but in a very real sense it has only just begun.

On behalf of the people of New York City I am very proud to welcome you for your fiftieth anniversary. We celebrate your accomplishments. We want to celebrate your anniversary with you. And we want to say to all of you: wherever you come from and for however long you are here, you are New Yorkers.

The President: I now call on the Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations, who will make a statement on behalf the African States.

Mr. Cissé (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): The fiftieth anniversary of our Organization — the midpoint in a century of life — affords us an opportunity to take a clear look at the past and at the realistic prospects for the future. Africa, the majority of whose States regained their national sovereignty after the establishment of the United Nations, is, certainly more than any other region, aware of the symbolism of the transition afforded us by the fiftieth session of the General Assembly that is opening this afternoon.

The General Assembly's fiftieth session begins with signs of prudent optimism, for the years that have elapsed have accustomed us to shifts between reasons for hope and reasons for concern.

We no longer live in a bipolar world, but the balance of terror has now given way to real wars, especially internal ones, that are going on throughout the world but especially in Africa. Accordingly, at this fiftieth session Africa will continue to emphasize conflict solution and peace-keeping operations.

Furthermore, problems of development will be of the utmost concern to our continent, whose economic situation is so serious that the high-level segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council held at Geneva in July was devoted to it. The diagnosis made on that occasion and the commitments entered into in that regard will prompt the African Group at the United Nations to accord major importance to their implementation at this fiftieth session.

As for the global conferences held at Rio de Janeiro, Vienna, Cairo, Copenhagen and, most recently, Beijing, Africa will work to encourage the implementation of their results.

In another context, at this session the debates will continue on the reform of United Nations organs, including the Security Council. Everyone is aware of the

importance Africa attaches to that reform. It will therefore continue to contribute to reflection on this subject so that democracy and fairness may prevail, together with the efficiency and effectiveness of the organs reformed.

I would not want to conclude my statement, Mr. President, without conveying to you the warmest congratulations of the entire African Group on your unanimous election to the presidency of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, which will be a session different from all others. I should also like to extend to you my own particular congratulations because your country, Portugal, has age-old links of friendship and mutually enriching cultural proximity with my own.

As for the outgoing President, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, I should like to say that, above and beyond the thanks we owe him for having guided the work of the forty-ninth session with competence and wisdom, Africa is proud of him and grateful to him for his constant concern, throughout his term of office, for the problems of our continent, of which he is one of the most illustrious sons.

The President: I now call upon His Excellency Mr. Utula Utuoc Samana, Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea to the United Nations, who will make a statement on behalf of the Group of Asian States.

Mr. Samana (Papua New Guinea): I have the honour to speak in my capacity as the Chairman of the Group of Asian States and, on their behalf, I wish to extend our warmest and sincere congratulations to you, Professor Diogo Freitas do Amaral, on your unanimous election to the important post of President of this historic fiftieth session of the United Nations General Assembly. Your distinguished career in the service of your country, Portugal, including your service as Deputy Prime Minister, is a clear demonstration of your personal qualities and your capability to guide the fiftieth anniversary session of the United Nations General Assembly to a successful conclusion. The Asian Group is confident of your leadership and will cooperate fully with you in the discharge of your high responsibilities.

The Asian Group also pays tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, the Foreign Minister of Côte d'Ivoire, for the efficient manner in which he conducted the affairs of the forty-ninth session. The Group has noted with appreciation Mr. Essy's closing statement at yesterday's last meeting of the forty-ninth session, in which he highlighted his achievements. The Asian Group acknowledges the many successes achieved by your predecessor.

The inspiring statement you have just delivered and those of the Secretary-General and the representative of the host country, the United States of America, will lay the basis upon which this historic fiftieth-anniversary session of the General Assembly will be conducted. The Asian Group acknowledges with appreciation the work of the Committee for the Fiftieth Anniversary, under the able chairmanship of His Excellency Mr. Richard Butler of Australia. The Committee has accomplished a tremendous task in bringing to New York for the first time in the history of the United Nations — and indeed of the City of New York — of over 150 heads of State and Government.

In that regard, the Asian Group wishes to pay tribute and to acknowledge the role and contributions of the Government of the host country, the United States of America, and in particular of the Mayor of New York City, the Honourable Rudolph Giuliani, his city government and the people of New York, for their cooperation in hosting this historic event.

The end of the cold war has created a rare opportunity for the international community to devote its energies and intellectual and material resources to realizing the world's aspirations for peace, security and development, as envisioned by the founding fathers of the United Nations. Their vision can only be realized through a collective adherence to a common purpose based on the principles of equity, tolerance and social justice, by expanding human capacity and the attainment of human security through equitable development and the achievement of global sustainability.

Despite serious set-backs, the United Nations has attained some tangible results in reaching global consensus, as seen in the recent United Nations conferences. The World Summit for Children in 1990, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, the population and development Conference in 1994, the World Summit for Social Development in 1995, the Beijing Women's Conference in 1995: all of these have laid a framework for achieving world peace, security and development towards the twenty-first century and beyond.

Indeed, the United Nations has stood the test of time and still remains the only multilateral organization that is

capable of forging international consensus. As such, the Asian Group salutes the great achievements of the United Nations, recognizes its shortcomings, pledges its fullest support and wholeheartedly lends its cooperation, together with other regional groups, in furthering the purposes of the United Nations, and it will endeavour to implement its declarations and programmes.

As we prepare to respond to new challenges and opportunities in the decades ahead, we are confident that the world body will continue to play a pivotal role in shaping a common vision and harnessing international cooperation in realizing mankind's quest for genuine peace and stability. The Asian Group pledges to be part of this historic process.

Finally, the Asian Group wishes to compliment and congratulate the Secretary-General, his predecessors and the Secretariat of the United Nations for their dedication to the world body as it celebrates its fiftieth anniversary. I am sure the founding fathers would be proud to share with us the achievements of the past 50 years in securing global security, peace and development.

The dreams for a better world are achievable — not perfectly, at least substantially — through perseverance, dedication and, above all, through the application of our common political will.

The President: I now call on the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations, who will make a statement on behalf of the Eastern European States.

Mr. Zlenko (Ukraine): On behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, it is a great honour for me to congratulate you, Sir, most warmly on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its current session. I am confident that your knowledge, diplomatic experience and personal skills will promote the successful solution of the complex problems that the United Nations faces at its half-century jubilee. I should like also to express my recognition to His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, President of the last session of the General Assembly, whose wise guidance resulted in the adoption of an entire set of constructive decisions, to the benefit of all United Nations Member States. Let me also greet the Secretary-General and all delegations on this occasion of the opening of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

Every session of the General Assembly is an important milestone in the life of the Organization, but there are certain sessions to which the international community attaches a special significance. This fiftieth session is one of them. It is appropriate to evaluate, at this half-century jubilee, what this Organization has done or has been unable to do; what the major consequences of its activities have been for people world wide; and if, in general, the world has become a better place due to the existence of the United Nations.

The radical historical changes that have taken place on the international scene since the establishment of the United Nations in 1945 have created a variety of new challenges for the Organization that now require serious consideration and a gradual adaptation of its activities and working methods to existing realities, and, to some extent, structural adjustments.

There is no doubt that we are entering a new world order, a period of great hope and tremendous changes. But the optimistic expectations of peaceful and easy transformations after the end of the cold war have significantly diminished over the last several years. The most evident trend seen today is a proliferation of conflicts within States. The world community also faces the urgent problems of mass migration and the flow of refugees, environmental degradation and natural disaster, which, together with economic instability, defy the ability of individual States to control them. But the end of the cold war has led to vast opportunities for States to work together to raise international cooperation to unprecedented levels. The reality of global interdependence and the end of ideological division significantly increase the role and capability of the United Nations.

It is no secret that today the United Nations is undergoing a period of severe criticism. Some even question its ability to respond appropriately to the increasing challenges. To realize the hopes that the world community has placed in the United Nations, we should try to find a new vision of vital international problems and new approaches to the development of global cooperation, and clearly define the role of the Organization and its Member States in the new system of international relations. The occasion of the fiftieth anniversary may be used also to promote the process of renewing the instruments of the Organization in order to increase its effectiveness and efficiency. If we manage to accomplish these tasks, it will be a major step towards the further implementation of the principal purposes of the United Nations, introduced in its Charter 50 years ago: international peace, development and democracy.

In conclusion, I should like to express our optimism as to the future of the United Nations and our hope that the dialogue that is emerging at the current session will lead to the creation of a solid foundation for the future activities of an Organization responsive to the aspirations of its founders.

I wish you, Mr. President, great success in the fulfilment of this noble task.

The President: I now call on the Permanent Representative of Barbados to the United Nations, who will make a statement on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Boucher (Barbados): The Barbados delegation, on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, has the honour to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of this historic session of the General Assembly. We are confident that you will guide the work of this session with distinction, and we assure you of our full cooperation.

We also congratulate your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, on his exemplary guidance and management of the forty-ninth session and on his initiatives and vision aimed at shaping a United Nations better equipped to tackle the problems of the twenty-first century.

The fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations should be a solemn occasion for reflecting on the mission, achievements and shortcomings of the Organization as it charts new directions to meet the challenge of tumultuous global change.

Fifty years ago, the founders produced a remarkable blueprint — the Charter of the United Nations — to govern relations among States in the post-war era. That vision of a world of universal peace and security, economic and social progress and equity is as valid today as it was then. While much has been achieved, much remains to be achieved. However, on this anniversary, we can proclaim that, despite many setbacks, the history of the United Nations represents an impressive record of accomplishments.

As we address the difficult problems of the twenty-first century, let us salute the vision which the founders brought to San Francisco in 1945 and the steadfast leadership provided by the distinguished Secretaries-General of the Organization. In this context, the Latin American and Caribbean States applaud the valiant efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and of his predecessor, Mr. Perez de Cuellár, who has brought great pride and honour to our region.

The fiftieth session finds the promise of global peace and security, heralded by the end of the cold war, elusive. The challenge which the Organization faces is to adapt its machinery and methods to the changing nature of conflicts in today's world. These conflicts are more complex than ever before. They rage primarily within nations, not between nations, and they are often accompanied by tragic human suffering, which has stretched the supportive capacity of the Organization to the limit.

"An Agenda for Peace", which the Secretary-General launched in 1992, is an encouraging response to this new challenge. It provides a comprehensive framework for strengthening the effectiveness of the United Nations through preventive diplomacy, more active peacemaking and post-conflict peace-building. The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States strongly supports this initiative, which has already borne fruit in our region.

In the areas of development and restructuring, which are also central to the work of the fiftieth session, the Latin American and Caribbean States will continue to participate actively in the various working groups established to address these important issues, particularly the Working Group on the strengthening of the United Nations system.

In the search for global solutions to the social, economic and environmental problems of our time, we have before us a comprehensive agenda for development action created by the continuum of United Nations conferences in Rio de Janeiro, Vienna, Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing.

Effective implementation will be crucial. Much will depend on the supportive role which the United Nations system plays in advancing development, especially in the poorest countries, and on the adequacy of resources to meet these expanded demands.

The fiftieth anniversary is an opportunity for reflection and recommitment to the ideals of the Charter. Let us be inspired by this unique vision of the aspirations of humankind. As a universal institution, the United Nations remains the only hope for such achievement.

Whatever its shortcomings, the world is a far better place with the United Nations than without it. Let the work of this historic fiftieth session reinforce this truth.

The President: I now call on the Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations, who will make a statement on behalf of the Western European and Other States.

Mr. Cassar (Malta): It is an honour for me, as Chairman of the Group of Western European and Other States for the month of September, to address the opening meeting of this session of the General Assembly.

At the outset, allow me to extend our sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your election by acclamation to the high-level post of President of the General Assembly. The Group of Western European and Other States would like to pledge its wholehearted support to you in the fulfilment of such an onerous task.

The members of the Group of Western European and Other States are particularly honoured to witness their nominated candidate presiding over the fiftieth session of the most representative body of the Organization.

Our congratulations and expressions of gratitude and appreciation are also directed to His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, who displayed great diplomatic skill and wisdom in guiding the work of the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly in an exemplary and dynamic manner.

In celebrating the opening of this session of the General Assembly, we underline the importance attached by the international community to the United Nations half a century after its birth. The Organization originated in the post-war era with the main objective of consolidating an international order founded on faith in fundamental human rights, the dignity and worth of the human person; and the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small; an organization specifically mandated to maintain international peace and security and to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character.

In marking its fiftieth anniversary, the Assembly is expecting to welcome the participation of an unprecedented number of Heads of State or Government. Such high-level participation can be ascribed only to the recognition by Member States of the significant role which the Organization plays in the attainment of peace. The international community looks to the United Nations as the forum best suited to address and resolve the most complex political, economic and social issues.

The last 50 years have seen the United Nations striving to fulfil the mandate assigned to it by the Charter. In so doing the Organization has received the continued support of the Member States which, through their participation and contribution, have demonstrated unity of purpose. Without this cooperation the Organization would not, and could not, have achieved the results that have been registered.

This fiftieth session of the General Assembly provides a timely and momentous opportunity for us to look back and pay tribute to the innumerable persons who through their dedication have made a valuable contribution to the work of the Organization. As Member States we salute the memory of those who sacrificed their lives in the cause of world peace in operations undertaken by the United Nations.

The tasks ahead for the Organization remain immense. The peoples of the world community cannot but reiterate their determination to contribute to the fulfilment of the original mandate given to the United Nations in San Francisco. The Group of Western European and Other States reaffirms its commitment and renews its pledge to continue to support the Organization so that it can better meet the challenges ahead.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.

United Nations A/50/PV.2

General Assembly

Official Records

Fiftieth Session

2nd plenary meeting
Tuesday, 19 September 1995, 5.30 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Freitas do Amaral . . . . . (Portugal)

The meeting was called to order at 5.30 p.m.

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

Election of the officers of the Main Committees

The President: I should like to inform members that the following representatives have been elected Chairmen of the six Main Committees of the Assembly and are accordingly members of the General Committee for the fiftieth session:

First Committee:	Mr. Luvsangiin Erdenechuluun (Mongolia)
Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee):	Mr. Francis Muthaura (Kenya)
Second Committee:	Mr. Goce Petreski (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)
Third Committee:	Mr. Ugyen Tshering (Bhutan)
Fifth Committee:	Mr. Erich Vilchez Asher (Nicaragua)
Sixth Committee:	Mr. Tyge Lehmann (Denmark)

I congratulate the Chairmen on their election.

Item 6 of the provisional agenda

Election of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly

The President: Pursuant to rule 31 of the rules of procedure, we shall now proceed to the election of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly.

All members of the General Assembly are eligible in this election except those already represented in the General Committee, namely, those countries whose representatives have been elected to the presidency of the General Assembly to the chairmanships of the Main Committees.

In accordance with paragraphs 2 and 3 of the annex to resolution 33/138, the 21 Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session shall be elected according to the following pattern:

(a) Six representatives from African States;

(b) Five representatives from Asian States;

(c) One representative from an Eastern European State;

(d) Three representatives from Latin American and Caribbean States;

(e) One representative from Western European or other States;

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This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

and

(f) Representatives of the five permanent members of the Security Council.

In accordance with paragraph 16 of annex VI to the rules of procedure, the election of the Vice-Presidents of the Assembly by secret ballot will be dispensed with when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled. We shall proceed accordingly.

I shall now read out the names of the endorsed candidates:

African States: Algeria, Congo, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Namibia

Asian States: Kuwait, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Thailand, Yemen

Eastern European States: Albania

Latin American and Caribbean States: Bolivia, Costa Rica, Saint Lucia

Western European and other States: Belgium

Since the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled in each region, I declare those candidates elected, in addition to the representatives of the five permanent members of the Security Council.

The following States have therefore been elected to Vice-presidencies of the General Assembly: Albania, Algeria, Belgium, Bolivia, China, Congo, Costa Rica, France, Kuwait, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Namibia, the Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Thailand, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Yemen.

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the States which have been elected Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly.

The General Committee for the fiftieth session of the General Assembly has now been fully constituted in accordance with rule 38 of the rules of procedure.

The first meeting of the General Committee will be held tomorrow, Wednesday, 20 September 1955, at 10 a.m., in Conference Room 3.

UNICEF Executive Board

The President: The Assembly will now turn its attention to document A/50/404, which contains a letter dated 30 August 1995 from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences addressed to the President of the Assembly.

As members are aware, the Assembly, in paragraph 7 of resolution 40/243, decided that no subsidiary organ of the General Assembly should be permitted to meet at United Nations Headquarters during a regular session of the Assembly unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly.

As indicated in the letter I have just mentioned, the Committee on Conferences has recommended that the General Assembly authorize the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which has been meeting from 18 August 1995, to meet until 22 September 1995.

In view of the fact that this date overlaps with the fiftieth session of the Assembly, may I take it that the General Assembly adopts the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.